

Memoir

OF THE LATE

PHILIP P. CARPENTER,

B.A. LONDON, PH.D. NEW YORK, F.S.A.

REPRINTED FROM THE *Warrington Guardian*, MAY 30th, 1877.

WARRINGTON:

PRINTED BY MACKIE AND BREWTHALL.

1877.

Miss Warrington Feb. 19, 1877

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Canadian Pamphlet
Collection

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How many there are born in or formerly connected with Warrington, now scattered over the surface of the earth, who will mourn over the sad announcement we were enabled to make in our second edition last Saturday, of Dr. Carpenter's death, which appears to have taken place in Montreal, Canada, on Thursday last !

Dr. Philip Pearsall Carpenter was the youngest son of the late Dr. Lant Carpenter, of Exeter and Bristol, and was born in the latter city, November 4th, 1819. He was first intended for an optician, and went to the well-known establishment of Messrs. Carpenter and Westley, Regent-street, London. But his eyesight not being equal to the work required to be done, his destination was changed to the ministry, for which he was specially trained at the Manchester New College, and in due course he took his B.A. degree at the London University.

Connected with the Unitarian body by birth and education, it was not until after he left England in 1865, that he formally separated from it, though his religious sympathies were always with a more fervent conception and embodiment of Christianity than found favour with the more pronounced Unitarians ; and he never allowed himself to be called

by their name. After he left College, his first cure of souls was the Presbyterian (Unitarian) congregation of Stand near Manchester, in which place he lived and laboured for three years. But he only accepted their invitation as a Presbyterian, under which name he conceived he was better able to preach the Gospel of Christ, as a spiritual religion, unfettered by sectarian definitions and articles of faith. On his retirement from Stand, he was first invited to Warrington, on the removal of the Rev. Thomas Hincks to Exeter, as a Unitarian, and in that form declined the invitation; but when the Chapel Committee invited him as a Presbyterian, he accepted the call in 1846, and for 16 years up to January 6th, 1862, with an interval of two years, when he visited America, he worked as the pastor of the Cairo-street congregation, as perhaps few ministers there, or anywhere else in Warrington, had ever worked before or since. His power and faculty for continued labour was a great gift from God, and something marvellous in itself. He never seemed to rest, or rather, as he used to say, he found rest in continual change of occupation. He united in himself great intellectual power, and culture worthy of the power, with a not less constitutional piety and religious enthusiasm—at once a scholar and a gentleman—and superadded to all this a faculty for business of all kinds, worthy of being named in combination with his intellect and his piety. Not very long after his settlement in Warrington came the memorable period of the Irish famine, which was accompanied in England with much distress in the manufacturing districts.

It was felt in Warrington that the Poor Laws were inadequate to meet the emergency, and public subscriptions were entered into, and a committee appointed to administer relief. One of the plans resolved on was the establishment of industrial schools for the employment and support of the able-bodied men and women out of work. In these schools trades were carried on, as shoemaking, tailoring, bag-making, book-binding, and letterpress printing, for the men, and sewing for the women. Amongst the chief agents and directors of the actual work done in these departments were Mr. Carpenter and his sister, now Mrs. Robert Gaskell, of Weymouth. With the return of business prosperity, the schools were of course discontinued; but Mr. Carpenter removed the printing press and the man he had taught to work it, to a room which he built at his own expense for the purpose, behind the Cairo-

street Schoolroom, where, under the name of "The Oberlin Press," he continued to print books and tracts, as an adjunct to his ministry at Cairo-street Chapel.

It is difficult to particularize where everything was done well; but the Sunday school was perhaps Dr. Carpenter's greatest delight and care. It is not too much to say that whilst he was personally connected with it, few Sunday schools equal to it existed in Warrington, and it is doubtful whether anything of the kind superior to it was found in a much wider area. All the riches of the doctor's well-stored mind were freely spent on the instruction and education of the children and the teachers. Religion, science, music, were freely taught, as his hearers and scholars were able to bear and receive; and it was here his breadth and liberality came more fully into play. Never laying much stress on tenets of theology or mere doctrinal preaching, believing that the life and the life only in imitation of Jesus Christ was the Christian religion, he united men of very diverse religious opinions in a common work. There were associated with him in his religious work at Cairo-street, Unitarians of various schools of thought, Methodists and Swedenborgians; and yet, though the most perfect liberty of utterance was not only allowed but encouraged, there never was a theological quarrel amongst them. The simple rule laid down was found sufficient to preserve unbroken peace, that in all religious discussions the speakers should affirm and never deny. But beyond this so great was the uniting spirit of Dr. Carpenter that though the affairs of the school were managed by a general committee of all the teachers, both men and women, numbering between 20 and 30, holding monthly meetings for this purpose, it was upon Dr. Carpenter's proposal agreed, settled, and worked out for many years, that nothing should be resolved upon in the management and direction of the school that had not the unanimous sanction of all,—that one dissentient should control the whole. And such was the peace and harmony of the society that this rule was frequently observed and never violated. And perhaps in this connection, for the scholars and teachers helped him in the work, may be mentioned his open air preaching at the Bridge Foot, which he carried on for several years. It was a curious fact, which puzzled him to account for, that working men who were his regular hearers there could never be induced to enter either Cairo-street Chapel or schoolroom for a religious service. They

would stand in the open air, even through a shower of rain, to listen, but would not sit in a pew or enter a room for this purpose.

The Warrington Museum is greatly indebted to Dr. Carpenter. He was one of the curators for many years, and the conchological department was almost wholly of his creation. He early attached himself to the study of conchology, and under the guidance of Dr. J. Gray, of the British Museum, attained so high a proficiency in that branch of natural history that the reports and monographs which he communicated to the British Association and the Zoological Society rank among the very best of their kind.

Dr. Carpenter had a very good knowledge of the theory of music, and played well both upon the organ and the piano. He had great faith in music and singing as instruments of culture. And under his care and teaching the singing of the Cairo-street scholars was worthy of the school, and for some time he gave lessons in singing twice a week to the scholars of the Newton-street schools, now better known as the People's College. The then Principal of that institution, Mr. Brewtnall, was greatly indebted to the able, self-denying, generous, and untiring aid he received from Dr. Carpenter in his earnest attempts to raise the status of education in the town; and affectionate memories of the departed are cherished by thousands who in the People's College came under his instruction and influence.

His faith in teetotalism, and his zeal as a teetotaler, placed him in the front ranks of total abstinence; and he advocated the cause on public platforms by solid argument with an earnestness and force not often surpassed. He was always an earnest speaker, speaking from the depths of his heart and moral convictions, and so was always impressive, but never sensational.

He utterly reprobated the idea of religion being limited to mere personal piety, and the usual employments of good people on Sundays; not that he undervalued any means of grace which Christian men and women found useful in the ordering of their own lives. But he connected with religion as its own proper and direct fruit all scientific knowledge that could be turned to human account. Hence he took a leading part in seconding and urging on all sanitary measures affecting the health of districts and families. By his influence and labour he was mainly instrumental in forming a Sanitary Association

in and for Warrington, which did good work, but was some years before its time. It served, however, to enlighten the public mind and to prepare for the noble successes that have since been realized in Warrington. On the same religious ground and animated by the same motive he recommended co-operation to the working classes of Warrington; and the Warrington Co-operative Society, with all its wonderful success, is very mainly due to the motion and influences that were set in operation in the Cairo-street Sunday School.

Another feature of Dr. Carpenter's moral character, and almost peculiar to himself, and to which Warrington is at this moment indebted for the existence of the White Cross Iron Works, was the personal friendship he formed for young men in whom he discerned a desire for mental and moral improvement. For many years he had a succession of such living with him, on terms of social equality, in his own house. They worked at their trades, but lived and boarded with him, and in this way received influences from him which have borne wonderful fruit in after years. His untiring industry, his promptitude, his wonderful and never-failing punctuality, his perfect purity, his high-toned charity, and his warm and earnest heart wonderfully fitted him to influence and educate young people, as the event has shown.

After 13 years of labour as the minister of Cairo-street Chapel, combined with abundant work of all benevolent kinds in the town and neighbourhood, needing rest and change, Dr. Carpenter visited the United States in December, 1858, prolonging his stay for two years, chiefly engaged in conchological work in connection with the Smithsonian Institution. In recognition of his valuable labours and gifts, on his leaving, the University of New York conferred on him in 1860 the well-merited distinction of Doctor of Philosophy. Dr. Carpenter now on his return to England resumed for a time the pastorate of Cairo-street Chapel. He also, in May, 1861, entered into married life, taking as his wife Miss Meyer, a German lady, who still survives him. In 1865 Dr. Carpenter finally left England and settled at Montreal, where he built himself a house in the higher and most pleasant part of the city, and employed himself in teaching a very select few, half a dozen, of the sons of the principal inhabitants for a single short session daily. He further threw himself with his accustomed ardour into philanthropic and scientific work in Montreal, just as he had formerly

done in Warrington. Indeed, this labour was continued to within a very few days of his death, for a letter, received from him by an old Warrington friend only ten days ago, stated that he was unwell and "off work," and the next news was the brief telegram received by Dr. William Carpenter announcing his death, but giving no particulars as to its cause. It is singular as it is sad to learn, as we have since, that this earnest sanitary reformer was carried off thus prematurely by typhoid fever.

So died one whose pre-eminently unselfish life, and ardent labour for the good of his fellows endeared him to thousands, and whose memory will be cherished with tender affection for long years to come. The catholicity of his spirit and the generous freedom with which he gave himself to any and every good work equally amongst his own and amongst others, won for him the affectionate confidence of men differing widely from him in sentiment and opinion. We are very glad to be able to add, from a pen that always commands attention in Warrington, the following additional obituary.

We have seldom read the announcement of more melancholy news than that we have just received of the decease of the Reverend Philip P. Carpenter, who was for many years a most active and useful inhabitant of Warrington, but who removed thence a few years since and settled at Montreal, in Canada, where he died very recently, in the 58th year of his age, a life, long if it be measured by its usefulness, rather than by the years it numbered. Mr. Carpenter was the youngest son of the Reverend Dr. Lant Carpenter, of Bristol, and under so learned a father his education, which had not been neglected, was such as to qualify him for any profession. He came to Warrington as the minister of Cairo-street Chapel, a work which he entered on with a zeal which communicated itself to others, and made him many friends. His Sunday school was thronged with scholars, where, with the aid of his sister, Miss Carpenter, who for a time lived with him, and was a great proficient in music, and possessed a singular power in teaching it, the work was made attractive. Mr. Carpenter was an early pioneer in sanitary matters, and made no secret of his views at a time when they were disregarded if not laughed at; but, like a true apostle, he persevered through ill report and good report, and the harvest of success has been brought about by the labours of such unselfish labourers as

he. Temperate almost to excess himself, he never ceased to impress on his fellow townsmen the benefits and blessings of abstinence from intoxicating drinks. To benefit others he almost denied himself a sufficiency of food ; and it may be asserted with absolute truth that if he had only a crust he was ready to divide it with any one in more need than himself. His charities were self-denying, and he stinted himself in order that he might help others. In the year 1848 there occurred a cotton famine, which fell like a blight upon the industry of Warrington. The cotton mills were all closed, and the workers both male and female, old and young alike, were thrown out of employ. Boys' schools were opened, where the scholars were both fed and taught book learning and industrial trades ; and here Mr. Carpenter's ability as an organiser, administrator, and instructor shone out to the greatest advantage. A very large number of boys were collected, reduced into order, and efficiently instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic ; while some of them were taught printing, others bookbinding, and many more learnt other industrial callings ; and it was very much owing to Mr. Carpenter that the stoppage of the mills was made a blessing to many of the young, who were not only kept out of the mischief, which is the child of idleness, but enabled to discover faculties of which they were ignorant. Singing formed an attractive part of the instruction during school hours, and when the famine ended, after lasting for sixteen weeks, there were some who regretted that they were no longer in the industrial school. Mr. Carpenter, who had many attainments, was skilled as a conchologist ; and his proficiency in this science having made him known abroad as well as at home, he was invited by several continental cities to arrange their collections, which he did in such a manner as to give entire satisfaction. His fame having reached America, he was invited to Washington, where he also went and arranged the collection of shells belonging to the Smithsonian collection. Whilst he was in Washington he was assisted by a young boy of the orphan house, who showed so amiable and teachable a disposition that Mr. Carpenter proposed to the governors of the house to adopt the boy as his son. The governors very naturally asked for some assurance that they might safely entrust the boy to one who was a comparative stranger ; and

Mr. Carpenter, who had the amiable simplicity of the Vicar of Wakefield, at once wrote to a friend who was no more known to the governors than himself to certify that he was trustworthy. The friend had no difficulty in saying that the boy would be happy in being adopted by such a parent; and the governors, who perhaps in the meantime had learned to know Mr. Carpenter, readily acceded to his request; and the event proved as happy for all parties as could have been desired. The boy, who grew up under Mr. Carpenter's care and teaching, is now a thriving farmer in the States, entertaining a grateful recollection of his benefactor. Mr. Carpenter returned from Washington with the diploma of doctor, which no man ever better deserved. After his return from Washington he married Miss Meyer, a German lady, who survives to lament his loss. Dr. Carpenter endeavoured to instil into the minds of the young a love of natural history by giving them gratuitous lectures, illustrated by diagrams drawn by himself, and he thought no pains too great if he could only do good. In 1865, in consequence of some pecuniary reverses, Dr. Carpenter removed to Canada, where he continued the same philanthropic labours that he had begun here. It will be long before the void occasioned by the death of this good man is filled up. For him it may be said in the words of one of the hymns printed by his scholars during the cotton famine of 1847:—

Then, spirit, haste; thy work is done,
Past is the goal, the race is run.

